



# Ensuring Safety with Effective Leadership

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In many organizations, people are often moved into leadership positions based on seniority, job skills, availability or demonstration of leadership potential. At the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA), we, as an organization, do not rely on the “sink or swim” philosophy. We provide our leaders, supervisors and employees many training opportunities, particularly when you consider the plethora of *SkillSoft* courses the Agency offers. The focus on building leaders sets DCMA apart from other organizations. Business schools today teach people to manage, but very few teach people how to lead. That’s a skill they expect students to bring with them. Assets, processes, products and production are managed; people are led. It’s the qualities and actions of a leader that we so often have to teach, and the DCMA leadership wants to reach out and ensure that the entire DCMA family is well-trained.

Like any other skill, leaders, supervisors, managers and employees can be taught how to eliminate or minimize the ways in which people injure themselves or cause property damage. Safety program management and loss control are learned assets. However, leadership and management practices alone are not sufficient to achieve outstanding safety performance; the entire Agency must be engaged and involved to the point where safety is part of the Agency’s culture.

## *Safety program management and loss control are learned assets.*

Ultimately, to achieve excellence in safety and make safety and health practices truly work, everyone must be empowered — management, supervisors, employees and contractors.

**Faith in seniors, subordinates and self.**  
**Integrity and Idealism.**  
**Respect for others and for self.**  
**Manners and Moderation.**

Participative, transformational leadership styles are needed at all levels of safety management, but at none are they more important than the supervisory level. Everyone in the workplace shares responsibility for safety and health, but without engaged supervisors, safety as a value in the organization is lost. Safety becomes just another task that must be completed. Management provides leadership by providing resources, motivation, priorities and accountability for ensuring that workers are healthy and safe. Effective leadership ensures that safety and health values and goals of management are shared among and emulated by members of an organization. For when employees see that the leaders in the organization place a high value on a safe and healthful workplace, comparable to other core values, workers are more likely to emphasize it in their own workplaces



Air Force Tech. Sgt. Greg Danet (left), chief of Weapons Safety, explains to Air Force Tech. Sgt. Steve McMillian, Operations Safety technician, the different stages of an Orbital Booster Vehicle at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Ronald Hill.)

and even while away from work. Workers who get hurt often say that they did so because they “made a dumb mistake.” But perhaps it wasn’t just another dumb mistake; rather it was a risk he or she just didn’t know about. That’s why training becomes important. As a leader you create the climate or culture as well as a safe work environment. Good leaders inspire people to excel at performing their jobs in a safe manner. Leadership proliferates by moving from involvement to empowering others to lead.

Naval Academy Prof. Karel Montor<sup>1</sup> coined the acronym FIRM, which is a description of the classic qualities of leadership:

FIRM leadership entails being an exemplary worker, neither creating nor exposing oneself to a hazard. It means expecting safe behavior from all involved. FIRM means setting the example. It means creating an overall climate where safety is regarded as a rightful value. Safety becomes a value when management puts it at the heart of organizational life and success. Safety management is not enough. Safety leadership and a safety and health management system are the orders of the day.

Mr. Max DePree<sup>2</sup> stated that the safety culture is positive when workers honestly believe that safety is a core value — when it is high on their priority lists and comparable to other organizational values. This perception can only be realized when workers believe that management is credible, when they live the words

of the policy statement on a daily basis and when financial decisions are made to protect people as well as to increase profits. To create an organizational safety culture requires behavioral change among leadership, middle management, supervisors and employees. Mr. DePree opens his book with the statement: “The first job of a leader is to define reality.” This may be the single most important action a supervisor can take regarding safety. Mr. DePree sees the process of leadership as a threefold concept:

1. Define reality: Where are we today?
2. Define the vision: Where do we want to be?
3. Define how we will get there.

<sup>1</sup> Montor, Karel. *Naval Leadership*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1987) 365-73.

<sup>2</sup> DePree, Max. *Leadership Is An Art*. (New York: Dell, 1989).

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A reality check of the DCMA safety program revealed that we were falling short in developing a safety culture within the organization. We found that DCMA employees aren't always aware of the potential exposure to hazards they experience, and we lacked an effective means to teach them. We had a means to teach leadership and management techniques but not how to operate safely. DCMA wants a workforce that:

- is aware of potential health hazards
- knows how to assess and mitigate risks
- is aware that safety is a core value of management

To reach that vision, DCMA is now offering supervisors and employees a tool that will provide meaningful safety training.

The responsibility for meeting federally mandated safety training requirements falls squarely on the Agency's leaders, but the reality is that management is burdened with a myriad of other responsibilities, and time becomes a rare commodity. To address this problem, the DCMA Safety Team has recently fielded *SkillSoft's* GoTrain computer-based training (CBT) courses. This new training selection will assist supervisors in meeting their federal requirements through a large selection of over 100 safety and environmental courses. Collateral duty safety advocates are currently designated as the administrators for safety training. Based on experience and regulations, the DCMA Safety Team developed course curricula for all employees by job series. For instance, quality assurance (QA) personnel will naturally have more safety CBTs to complete than administrative support specialists because of the greater potential QAs have for exposure to hazards in manufacturing facilities.

Employees will be able to fine-tune their job series' curricula in discussion with their supervisors and safety personnel. Exemptions and equivalencies are available depending on the circumstances involved.

The system provides supervisors with automatic monthly status reports for their employees. And, in the future, DCMA plans to develop safety CBTs for top management, new employees, supervisors and collateral duty safety advocates.

DCMA is excited about these new CBT opportunities. Employees and supervisors have asked for training materials like this for years. It's now a reality, and we believe it will be a giant step in providing a culture that drives our safety performance. Working safely enhances our bottom line — to support the warrior. With proper teaching of effective management and leadership skills, safe performance can be learned. We ask for your acceptance by using these courses to educate yourself, and we thank you for your continued support of this important leadership initiative.

#### **Mr. Stephen Broich**

Mr. Broich is a graduate of Rutgers University (1975) with a B.S. degree in biology. He received an M.S. degree from Hood College in environmental science (1980). Mr. Broich retired after 23 years in the U.S. Army as a Major in the Medical Service Corps. He received his certification in the Comprehensive Practice of Industrial Hygiene in 1991, and he began work for DCMA that same year.

#### **Mr. Lloyd Roberts**

Mr. Roberts is a retired U.S. Army aviator, for both fixed and rotary wing aircraft, and has over 33 years of Aviation Safety and Safety and Occupational Health experience. Prior to becoming part of the DCMA family in September 2004, Mr. Roberts served as the safety director for the Army Intelligence and Security Command.